

the evening before —
take the small hunched forms
out of the jaws of iron
kill and skin them —
reset the traps for more.

I sat looking downhill
at the river sliding by,
silent and the steel dusty
light of the rising sun,
leaf shadow — and the cut stone
that I was, not moving one breath —
so the fox came within three feet

Facing, we stared at each other,
stone blasted, still,
no twitch of arm
nor even his green eye looking in
as he dug into me and I
to him, deep to
ancestry and origin

stood there, sat there — still —
among the rabbit carcasses
and the skins and the sun's blade
skinning the dawn sky,
each powerful as an anvil,
stock still in the knocked silence
of beast against beast against hill
and the cold metallic grip of the traps
touching one another
and the day's kill.

— John Millett

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AFTER TU FU

This June snow
has surprised everyone —
fat flakes have dusted
the branches, dirt and
pine needles. Even the
clumps of lady bugs don't
know what to make of it.
Spreading our blanket,
we picnic all the same.